

15. A FLYING ACCIDENT TO A SWIFT

Sálim Ali, my husband Loke Wan Tho, and I were looking at a bungalow in Fraser's Hill (a holiday resort in Malaya) at about dusk on 20th November 1958. There were swarms of swiftlets (*Collocalia*) flying about and feeding themselves, and we remarked that they looked very like locusts or falling leaves. Suddenly, at 7.40 p.m. when almost dark, I saw out of the corner of my eye an object falling on to the road about 15 feet from the house. I walked to the spot and found a dead swiftlet which was still warm when I picked it up. The only conclusion I can draw from this extraordinary incident was that the bird had collided with another swift and thus met its death. The sky was quite open except for the swifts flying about, and there were no trees or wires above the spot where the bird had fallen. The skin of the swift (*Collocalia esculenta*) is now with Mr. Sálim Ali in the Bombay Natural History Society's collection.

'MALLAIG,'
GALLOP ROAD,
SINGAPORE,
June 15, 1959.

CHRISTINA LOKE

[Collisions among birds in flight are rare, but not unknown. In swifts, which are exceptionally dextrous fliers, the cases must be rarer still. The incident reminds us of a very extraordinary collision, albeit man-made, that took place on a Bombay cricket field a few years ago while a match in progress was at a critical stage for the batting side. The 'hope' of the side was facing the bowling of the opposing 'hope'. The ball left the bowler's hand and the batsman stepped out to swipe. Both players and spectators were however left agape with wonder since the ball never reached the other end! What had happened was that a sparrow flying across the pitch was luckless enough to reach just the wrong spot at just the wrong time and fell dead, the impact diverting the ball off its course. It was an happening that one would have to live a million years to see repeated, yet all that the bewildered batsman could think of at the time was calculated malice on the part of his opponents!—Eds.]

16. A PYTHON'S MEAL

Two days ago a python was killed here. It measured 11 feet. It had swallowed a fully grown male chinkara with $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches horns. It is interesting to note that this was the fourth python killed here which had swallowed a chinkara but never such a full-grown animal.

I am sending this information to find out if you have other similar records. I was told by a local villager that some years ago he had seen a python coiled round a fully grown panther cub.

HINGOLGADH CASTLE,
JASDAN, KATHIAWAD,
September 25, 1958.

RAJA OF JASDAN

[In a previous issue (51: 945) the same writer has described a python capturing and coiling itself round a chinkara doe.

In Volume 54 (p. 196) appears a note by U Tun Yin with photograph of a python in Burma that had swallowed a small thamin (*Cervus eldii*) shortly before. But of the many other notes published in the *Journal* on the food of the python perhaps the most remarkable is that by Major Arundel Begbie (17: 1021) who cut out of a snake 18 ft. long a well-grown leopard measuring 4 ft. 2 in. from nose to rump. The tail was too decomposed to be accurately measured. The panther had been swallowed head first with its forearms stretched out in front.—EDS.]

17. VOCAL SOUNDS FROM SNAKES

Note 16 in Volume 55 reporting vocal sounds from a python (*P. molurus*) and a dhaman (*Ptyas mucosus*) reminded me at once of an occasion in 1930 in Wad Medani in the Sudan when I seized with a pair of metal forceps a young lined house snake, *Boodon lineatus*. It squeaked once, quite definitely, the noise being suggestive of something between the squeak of a mouse and that of a press-the-button toy animal.

Some years back, I seem to remember correspondence, in *The Field* I believe, about booming or bell-like noises from puff-adders, *Bitis arietans*. In the Sudan, in southern Kordofan and elsewhere there is, or was, folk belief of snakes making noises to lure animals as prey, but few except the simple took this as other than fairy tale.

ADEN PROTECTORATE HEALTH SERVICE
HEADQUARTERS,
KHORMAKSAR, ADEN,
March 13, 1959.

N. L. CORKILL